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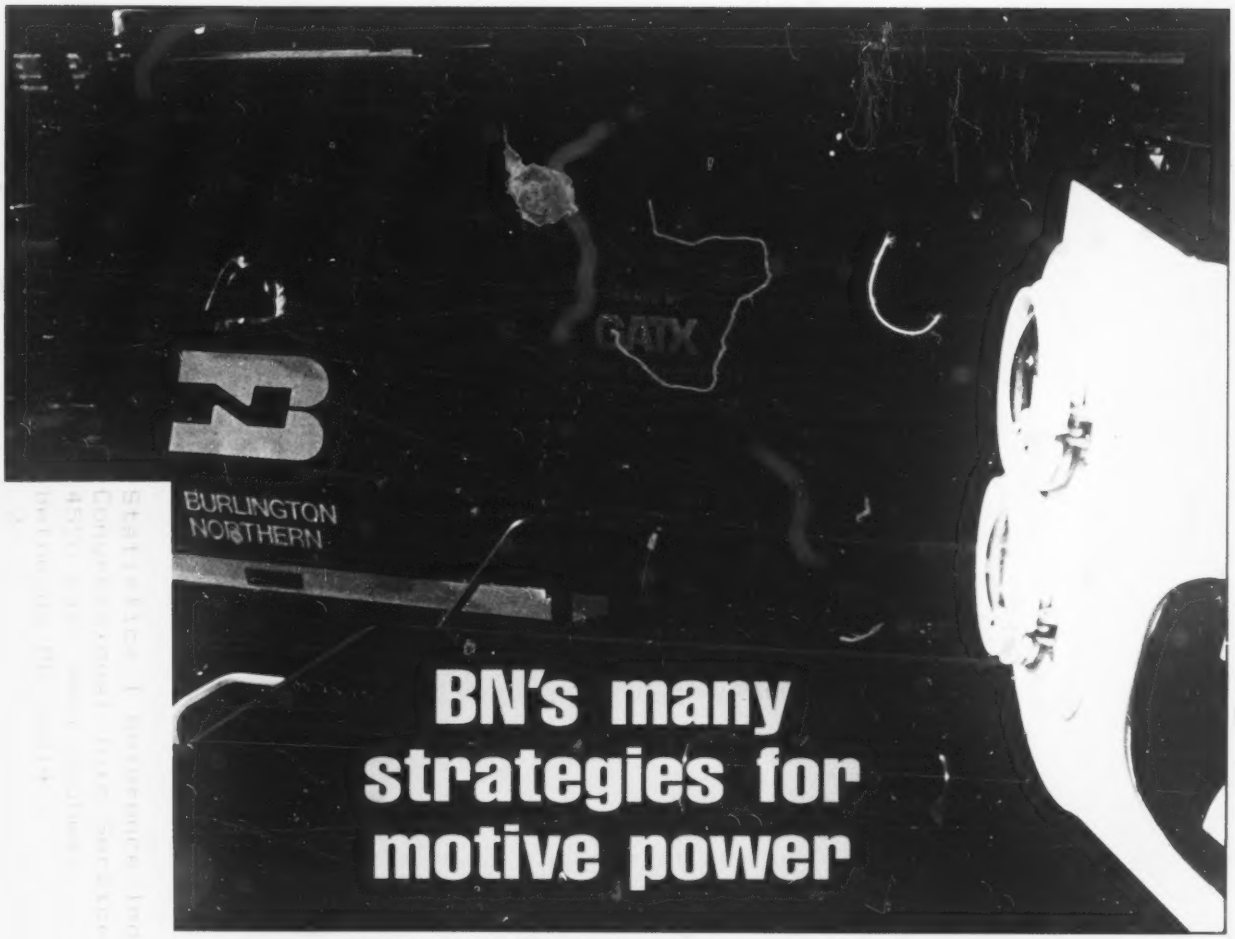
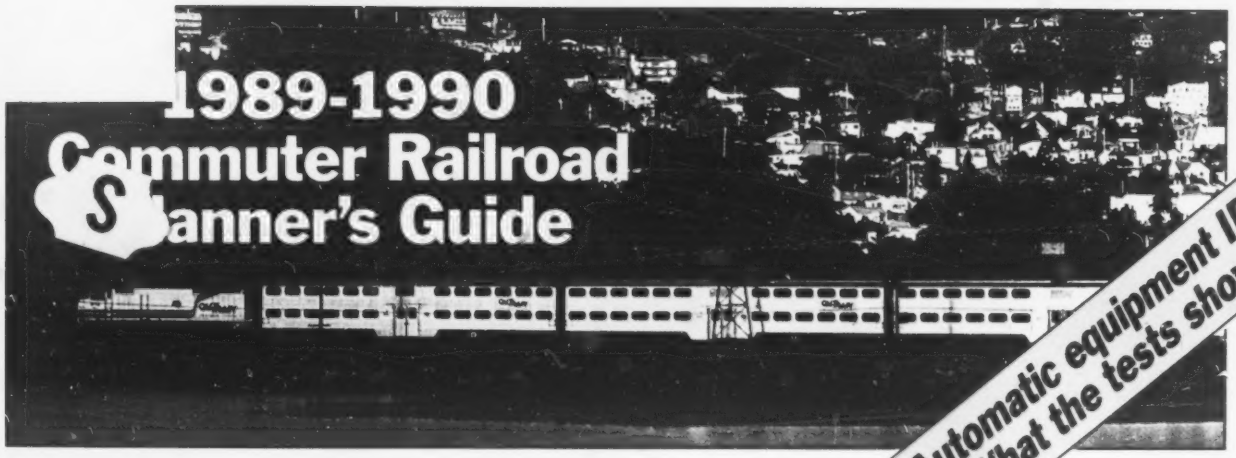
October 1989

Railway Age

...for the new age of railways and rail transit



BN's many strategies for motive power



1989-1990 Commuter Railroad Scanner's Guide

Automatic equipment ID: What the tests show

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1989-90 COMMUTER RAILROAD PLANNER'S GUIDE

California looks to rail....CG3

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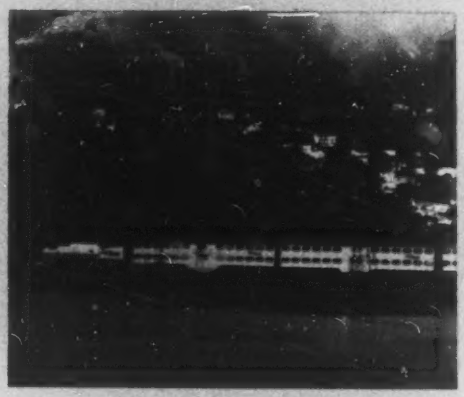
Who's who on the supply side....CG8

A cross-indexed directory of companies—equipment/materials/services suppliers and consultants—with expertise in commuter railroading.



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INSIDE

California shows the way—the rail way

LUTHER S. MILLER

California's reputation as the land of the freak and the home of the knave is one of those generalizations that are best taken, in the words of Samuel Goldwyn, with a dose of salts—at least where public transportation is concerned.

Maybe California did freak out on highways, once. Maybe California has had more than its share of enthusiasts promoting "tomorrow's transportation" before today's was given a fighting chance.

But California years ago rejected the notion that monorail, for example, was a sensible substitute for conventional rapid or light rail transit. And while listening politely to the blandishments of maglev promoters, with their visions of trains floating over the countryside at 300 mph, California appears to have concluded that just as you have to crawl before you walk, and walk before you run, so must you run before you levitate—and what's running best and fastest all over the world today is the steel-wheeled train on steel rails. Evidence of this down-to-earth thinking is found in the remarkable partnership which California has forged with Amtrak in creating one of the finest intercity passenger rail systems to be found in any state. And there's more.

The postwar rail transit renaissance began in San Francisco, with the building of BART and the upgrading of the Muni lines into a modern light rail system. What really put light rail on the map, however, was the phenomenal success of the San Diego Trolley, which has been expanding, by popular demand, almost since the day it went into service. Sacramento and San Jose subsequently went the light rail route. Los Angeles, after nearly choking on a diet of concrete spaghetti, is simultaneously building phase I of a rapid transit system and two connecting light rail lines.

Commuter trains? They're also making news in California, as Contributing Editor William D. Middleton reports in *Railway Age's* 1989-90 Commuter Railroad Planner's Guide, a pull-out section in this issue.

Is there a place for such concepts as maglev and monrail? Yes. That place right now seems to be airports and amusement parks and perhaps other limited operation applications. Meanwhile, those who are so vigorously pushing maglev as a solution to our intercity transportation needs might do well to note that the two countries which have pioneered in the development of maglev—West Germany and Japan—have not been quick to apply it themselves. "Is Maglev Losing Its Attraction?" is the suggestive title of an editorial in the September *International Railway Journal*, in which Editor Mike Knutton reports that a senior official of the West German Ministry of Transport has said that a maglev line "will almost certainly never be built in West Germany." And according to the magazine *New Scientist*, a long-distance maglev in Japan may be 20 years away.

As for monorail, Germany has had a small one in operation for many years—*one*. Rapid transit and light rail are Germany's urban systems of choice.

A new system that does hold promise is Larry K. Edwards' "System 21" monobeam concept (*RA*, Aug., p. 28)—but it's being promoted not as a replacement for large rapid transit systems but as a feeder to them, or for other light-to-medium density purposes.

It's said that there's a time and a place for everything. Knowing the time—and the place—is the secret of sound transportation planning.

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Editorial and Executive Offices
New York, N.Y. 10014, 345 Hudson Street
212/620-7200
Fax: 212-633-1165

ARTHUR J. McGINNIS, Jr.,
President and Publisher
LUTHER S. MILLER, Editor

Publishing Director: Robert G. Lewis

Managing Editor: Judy McCusker
Railway Division Manager: Carolyn McGinnis
Intermodal Editor: Douglas John Bowen
Financial Editor: Anthony D. Kruglinski
Contributing Editors: John H. Armstrong, William D. Middleton
Art Director: Maurice H. Mates
Graphics Director: Diana Line
Graphics Coordinator: Pat Nash
Photo Editor: Kent Patterson

Corporate Production Director: Mary Conyers-Brown
Production Manager: Tina Small
Circulation Director: John Scunziano
Circulation Fulfillment Manager: Sheila Sullivan

Western Editorial Offices
Chicago, Ill. 60604,
175 W. Jackson Boulevard, Suite A-1927
312/427-2729
Fax: 312-427-3014

GUS WELTY, Senior Editor
Engineering Editor: Robert E. Tuzik
Editorial Assistant: Wanda Welty
Contributing Editors: Bill Fahrenwald, Frank Malone

International Offices
Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 4RJ, England
P.O. Box 8
Telephone: 44-326-313945
Fax: 011-44-326-319066

International Editors: Michael Knutton, David Briginshaw

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Equipment

CSL Intermodal: Is leasing from Trailer Train 100 all-purpose articulated intermodal flatcars capable of carrying intermodal trailers and containers of varying sizes. Delivery began in September.

Itel Containers International: Awarded a $17 million contract to AmeriContainer for 5,000 TEU (20-foot equivalent units)—"the first volume container contract awarded to an American manufacturer in many years," according to the builder. AmeriContainer has converted a former Pullman-Standard freight car plant at Hammond, Ind., for the manufacture of containers (*RA*, Aug., p. 7). The contract with Itel calls for the design and manufacture of both 20-foot and 40-foot ISO dry vans as well as the new, lightweight, 48-foot domestic container designed as a joint project by ITEL/Container Concepts, Inc. Construction of the Itel order is to begin in February 1990.

Itel Rail: Is expanding its car leasing operations into Mexico through an investment by parent Itel Corp. in Mexico City-based Quadrum, which through its subsidiary Endasa operates a lease fleet of 1,700 hopper cars, 450 tank cars, and 350 boxcars. Itel purchased 35% of the outstanding shares of Quadrum, with the option of extending its ownership to more than 50%, and will make additional investments in the Mexican company. Quadrum operates a rail car repair and construction facility in Durango, Mexico. Itel operates North America's largest independent car leasing fleet, 72,000 cars.

XTRA Rail/Intermodal Division: Is acquiring 900 dry van intermodal trailers and 500 containers at a cost of more than $18.5 million. Monon will supply 400 of the trailers and all of the containers. Miller will supply 500 trailers. Deliveries are to be completed in November. All of the new units will be 48 feet long and 102 inches wide. The new containers will be added to XTRA's domestic container per diem leasing fleet. XTRA also said it will eliminate all 40-foot per diem trailers and substantially reduce its fleet of 45-foot, 96-inch-wide trailers as the larger equipment is phased in.

Taipei: Will acquire 132 rapid transit cars, at a cost of $170 million, from United Rail Car, a subsidiary of Nissho Iwai American Corp. and Kawasaki, which will build the cars at its Yonkers, N.Y., plant.

Facilities

BC Rail: Is investing $4 million (Canadian) in improvements to its North Vancouver yards to accommodate increases in lumber reloads and intermodal as well as general carload traffic.

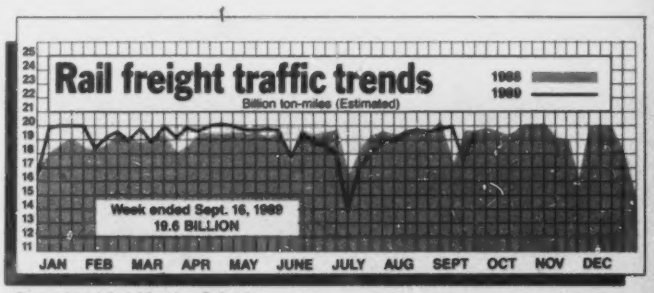
French National Railways: Awarded a contract to a French subsidiary of Amtech of Dallas, Tex., for development of an automatic vehicle identification (AVI) system that is to be tested beginning in 1990 on the Marseille-Lille line and, if successful, installed system-wide over the next five years. The SNCF-Amtech system will be a strong candidate for designation as the European standard by the International Union of Railways (UIC), according to Philippe Larue, Amtech's vice president for international marketing. The Amtech technology was the basis for approval earlier this year by the AAR and by the International Standards Organization of proposed standards for railcars in the U.S. and Canada and intermodal containers wide.

Revenue freight carloadings

Commodity	Sept. 16 week	Sept. 9 week	Sept. 2 week	Aug. 26 week
Grain	25,172	21,384	26,671	25,980
Other farm products	1,353	888	1,040	946
Metallic ores	20,936	20,246	21,317	20,392
Coal	130,367	119,748	133,827	132,806
Crushed stone, gravel and sand	18,232	14,752	18,123	17,498
Nonmetallic minerals	9,545	8,800	10,302	10,149
Grain mill products	9,909	8,830	10,280	10,144
Food and kindred products	8,411	7,712	9,075	8,797
Primary forest products	9,441	8,035	9,447	9,312
Lumber and wood products	6,357	5,016	6,822	6,813
Pulp, paper and allied products	10,198	10,290	10,875	10,630
Chemicals and allied products	26,873	24,804	29,313	27,345
Petroleum products	5,365	4,851	5,244	5,298
Stone, clay and glass products	11,462	9,637	10,982	10,825
Coke	5,546	5,449	5,385	5,406
Metals and products	9,235	7,879	10,709	9,645
Motor vehicles and equipment	18,041	14,772	17,406	18,114
Waste and scrap materials	8,936	6,585	8,311	8,302
All other carloads	7,489	5,856	7,025	7,700
Total Cars Loaded	343,488	286,544	362,148	346,886
% change from previous year	(3.6)	(1.3)	.0	.7
Cumulative total: 37 weeks		12,284,084	% change (1.0)	
Estimated revenue ton-miles (billions)	19.6	17.4	20.0	19.8
% change from previous year	(3.0)	(1.1)	.0	1.5
Total: 37 weeks		1989 705.6	1988 705.8	% change .0

Intermodal traffic

	Sept. 16	Sept. 9	Sept. 2	August 26
Trailers	69,924	56,978	73,107	63,918
Containers	51,178	42,047	50,640	51,432
Total	121,102	99,025	123,747	115,350
% change from previous year	2.9	(1.8)	3.9	(1.2)
Cumulative total: 37 weeks		4,163,421	% change 3.1	


Rail freight traffic trends
Billion ton-miles (Estimated)
1988
1989
Week ended Sept. 16, 1989
19.6 BILLION
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUNE JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC

Source: Association of American Railroads